THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL) : (a) The food and agro-based processing sector has been included within the definition of priority sector for bank lending.

(b) Reserve Bank of India has issued circular in this regard on January 28, 1999.

(c) and (d) At present, a target of 40 per cent of net bank credit has been stipulated for domestic scheduled commercial bank's lending to the priority sector with the expansion in bank credit, the total lending to priority sector also increases. The scope of the priority sector has been expanded from time to time taking into account emerging priorities.

Compulsory Registration of Marriages

2707. SHRI DAWA LAMA

DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD :

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to make registration of marriages compulsory to safeguard the interest of women;

(b) if so, the details therof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER FOR LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI) : (a) to (c) Registration of marriages solemnised or contracted under the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 and the Special Marriage Act, 1954 is complusory. Section 8 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 provides that if the State Government is of the opinion that it is necessary or expedient so to do, it may provide that the entering of the particulars of Hindu marriages in the Hindu marriage register shall be compulsory in the State or in any part thereof, whether in all cases or in such cases as may be specified. Certain State Governments, namely, the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka have State Acts providing for compulsory registration of marriages in those States. Registration of marriages solemnised otherwise than under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 is permissible under section 16 of the said Act if such marriages fulfil certain conditions as laid down under chapter III of that Act. The question of making the registration of Hindu marriages compulsory could thus be considered by the State Governments as per the local situations prevailing in those States.